

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 03914 281731Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 3914

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 3914 VICE 2914)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, PGOV,(5)

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION IN SHIHCHIACHUANG

1. SUMMARY. IMPRESSIONS OF A CONGEN OFFICER VISITING SHIHCHIACHUANG, PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF HOPEH, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH A BROADCAST ANNOUNCING THAT SHIHCHICHUANG HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER DIRECT PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION, SUGGEST THAT THE MUNICIPALITY MAY BE OUT OF STEP WITH CURRENT POLITICAL TRENDS AND IN NEED OF RECTIFICATION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING A ONE-DAY STOP IN SHIHCHIACHUANG MARCH 15-16 FOLLOWING PEKING CONSULTATIONS, CONGEN OFFICER VISITED A TEXTILE MILL AND THE PRODUCTION BRIGADE OF A COMMUNE, AS WELL AS HAVING NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CHINA TRAVEL SERVICE GUIDE. THE PATTERN OF COMMENTS IN BRIEFINGS AND CONVERSATIONS WAS IN STRONG CONTRAST TO THAT IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA, AND TO THAT ENCOUNTERED BY CONGEN OFFICER IN OTHER PROVINCIAL STOPS (LOYANG, WUHAN, CHANGSHA). MOST STRIKING WAS THE SHIHCHIACHUANG EMPHASIS ON THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION, WHICH RECEIVED ONLY
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PAGE 02 HONG K 03914 281731Z

PASSING MENTION, ELSEWHERE, AND THE COMPLETE OMISSION OF REFERENCE TO THE GANG OF FOUR. THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION WAS CONTINUALLY REFERRED TO AS THE MAJOR EVENT CONTRIBUTING TO INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRESS. NO REFERENCE WAS MADE TO THE FIFTH NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (NPC) OR THE CURRENT MODERNIZATION EFFORT. CONGEN OFFICER RECALLS ONLY ONE OCCASION WHEN HUA

KUO-FENG WAS MENTIONED, BY THE PRODUCTION BRIGADE LEADER. AND THE GUIDE IN INTERPRETING OMITTED THAT MENTION. MOREOVER, WHEN CONGEN OFFICER ASKED ABOUT SUCH POLICIES AS THE CURRENT ONE ON MATERIAL INCENTIVES, SHE RECEIVED MINIMAL RESPONSE, CREATING THE IMPRESSION THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE NOT AT ALL UP TO DATE ON RECENT POLICY CHANGES OR WERE STRONGLY DISINCLINED TO TALK ABOUT THEM.

3. THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE TRIP, THERE WERE CONSTANT REFERENCES TO THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF THE GANG OF FOUR, TO THE GANG'S OVERTHROW, TO THE FIFTH NPC AND THE FOUR MODERNIZATIONS, AND THE "WISE LEADERSHIP OF CHAIRMAN HUA". THE PRESENTATION AT A COMMUNE IN CHANGSHA, FOR INSTANCE, FREQUENTLY ALLUDED TO THE DIRECTIVES OF THE FIFTH NPC. KNOWLEDGEABLE RESPONSES WERE ALSO GIVEN ELSEWHERE TO CONGEN OFFICER'S QUESTIONS ABOUT MATERIAL INCENTIVES.

4. A PROVINCIAL BROADCAST ON MARCH 17 CRYPTICALLY ANNOUNCED THAT SHIHCHIACHUANG MUNICIPALITY WAS BEING PLACED UNDER PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION. REASONS CITED IN THE BROADCAST WERE "TO KEEP ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS AND TO MEET WORK REQUIREMENTS."

5. COMMENT: SHIHCHIACHUANG APPEARS TO RETAIN ATTITUDES LEFT OVER FROM THE GANG OF FOUR ERA, THE
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PAGE 03 HONG K 03914 281731Z

KIND OF "GANG-INFLUENCED THINKING" THAT THE PRC MEDIA FREQUENTLY CITE AS NEEDING RECTIFICATION. PLACING THE MUNICIPALITY UNDER PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION INDICATES THAT ITS LEADERSHIP, HOLDOVERS FROM BEFORE THE OVERTHROW OF THE GANG, HAS BEEN TURNING IN AN UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE. A LOCAL LEADERSHIP SHAKEUP MAY WELL BE IN THE OFFING.
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